

# Sleep Habits



Good sleep is important for children to have enough energy during the day and feel their best. When kids don't sleep well or get enough sleep, it can affect their behavior and mood the next day. If you have questions or concerns about your child or teen's sleep habits, talk to your child's primary care provider.

Recommended amount of sleep for children and adolescents by the American Association of Sleep Medicine<sup>1</sup>

Age	Total sleep per night
1-2 years	11-14 hours (including naps)
3-5 years	10-13 hours (including naps)
6-12 years	9-12 hours
13-18 years	8-10 hours

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Sleep Medicine. [pediatricsleepdurationconsensus.pdf \(aasm.org\)](https://www.aasm.org/pediatricsleepdurationconsensus.pdf)



## What impacts sleep?

Younger children tend to go to sleep earlier in the evening and may wake up earlier in the morning, while teenagers tend to go to bed later and wake up later. Teens may want to stay up late to watch television or videos, play games, or talk to friends or family.

Children with anxiety may have trouble falling asleep due to worries. Children with ADHD may have challenges relaxing before bed.

Sleep apnea, a type of breathing difficulty, can lead to poor sleep. Children with sleep apnea may snore loudly (even when not sick), gasp while sleeping, or feel tired during the day. Ask your doctor if you are concerned.



## What does treatment look like?



Developing **good sleep** habits and a type of therapy called **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)** are typically more effective for most people than medications in improving sleep.



Some families may use **supplements** like melatonin, which is a hormone, for sleep. Melatonin is best used in the short term and at low doses. Melatonin doesn't put someone to sleep, but it helps with feeling sleepy. If melatonin is taken too late at night, it may affect that person's sleep schedule the next night.



Sometimes doctors may prescribe other medications for sleep if there is another reason a child can't fall asleep.

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## What can I do?

- Create a **sleep routine**. Try to do the same things each night to get your child's brain in the mood for sleep.
- Establish a **schedule**. Have your child go to bed at the same time each night and wake up around the same time each morning to help set their internal clock.
- Try to **turn off screens** at least 60 minutes before bed to relax and "wind down." Bright lights, fun sounds, and constant videos are engaging and keep our minds active, making it difficult to fall asleep.
- Make the bedroom a **calm, cool environment**. Turn off the lights or use only a nightlight.
- Use the bed **just for sleeping** and not for other activities, like homework or games.
- Try to **avoid naps** after school (if developmentally appropriate), or keep them short.
- Make bedtime a time when everyone in the house **winds down** so kids aren't tempted to stay up with family.
- Worries can make it hard for some kids to fall asleep. **Relaxing** the body and mind with deep breathing or pleasant imagery can help.
- Some **apps** can help lead children through relaxation strategies. There are also apps with CBT-I strategies.
- Avoid **caffeinated sodas and coffee/tea**, especially in the afternoon or evening.
- If your child's sleep cycle is already very off, **adjust their schedule gradually**. For example, if they are currently going to sleep at 2 am, try going to bed 15-30 minutes earlier each night until you get to the desired bedtime.



## How do I get help?

If you need more help, talk to your primary care provider or get support from a mental health provider. To find a mental health provider, call the phone number on the back of your child's insurance card and ask for a list of covered mental health providers in your area. You can also search for providers on your insurance company's website. For support finding resources for housing, food, and more, visit the [Children's National Hospital Community Resources website](#).

- Scan below or [click here](#) for more for more information about how to find a mental health provider and how to get help in a crisis.



Pediatric **Health** Network

